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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 SANTO DOMINGO 006134

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR INL/LP AND WHA

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [SMIG](#) [KJUS](#) [MARR](#) [DR](#)

SUBJECT: (S) DOMINICAN REPUBLIC: AMBASSADOR, IMMIGRATION
DIRECTOR DISCUSS CORRUPTION

Classified By: NAS Director Richard Hawkins, reasons 1.4 (b,d).

1. (S) Summary: The Ambassador and Immigration Director Baret discussed corruption in Dominican airports and ports on November 3, 2004. The Ambassador named names, including military officers assigned to Immigration, and urged dismissal and prosecution. Baret said prosecution was difficult, promised action, and asked for more USG help. Embassy learned on November 5 that Baret had arranged with the Armed Forces Secretary to have one of the leading offenders fired. End summary.

2. (S) On November 3, 2004, Ambassador met with Dominican Immigration Director Carlos Amarante Baret on the subject of official corruption in the Immigration organization. The meeting was called to inform and impress upon Director Baret the need to implement certain measures to combat corruption, especially in Dominican ports of entry. Ambassador informed Baret that specific political appointees and inspectors within the General Directorate of Migration were preparing to smuggle people to the United States and Europe. DCM, DHS, LEGATT, SAA, NAS, and CONS/Fraud Prevention attended the meeting.

3. (S) Ambassador told Baret Dominican alien smuggling organizations have developed a high level of smuggling expertise, created extensive logistical support infrastructures, and recruited a broad band of corrupt officials, including some colonels and general officers of the Dominican Armed Forces. Embassy has received reports that employees of Immigration are regrouping after the change of government and recommencing their activities. Ambassador told Baret migration inspectors are planning to smuggle 20 children through El Cibao Airport, near Santiago. This group of inspectors supports alien smuggling organizations that charge about USD 9,000 for each smuggled Dominican. Ambassador gave Baret names of three of the inspectors. Baret said the three plus one other had been or would soon be fired.

4. (S) Ambassador indicated some of the political appointees working for Baret had been involved in alien smuggling in the past. He named several names, including the colonel in charge of military coordinators and the military coordinator at Santo Domingo's Las Americas airport, along with the latter's contact in Immigration. Baret said he had recently discussed corruption with the colonel, named Luna, and said a subordinate of Luna's sends illegal migrants to European countries. He complained that as soon as he fires one bad military officer, another bad one arrives. He added the military coordinator at Las Americas had been interrogated the same day concerning a passport case. DATT and Baret discussed whether to let the Armed Forces take action against their own people or to involve the Attorney General.

5. (S) Ambassador said Punta Cana airport, at the eastern tip of the island, is another area of concern. He named names, including the supervisor who transferred a known people smuggler to Punta Cana and the supervisor of an Immigration shift that works with a military contact to smuggle aliens. Baret said he knew the military man in question and thought he was a serious, religious, family man.

6. (S) Ambassador said Immigration in the past never had alien smugglers prosecuted. He encouraged Baret to make an immediate change in that area. Baret said a friend of his was approached by the brother of the former Immigration director, Siquio Ng de la Rosa, to propose the smuggling of four to five PRC nationals per month into the DR. The brother offered the friend USD 1,000 per PRC national and Baret USD 5,000. Baret said he wanted Ng and his brother prosecuted in the U.S. (Note: DHS is evaluating the available information and will decide whether or not to open an investigation. End note.)

7. (S) DCM urged Baret not to permit the usual practice of moving the bad people to a different location. She pointed out the possible impact on U.S.-Dominican cooperation if the DR were placed in Tier 3 after the February 2005 evaluation of their anti-Trafficking in Persons effort. Baret said it was not easy to pull together the evidence for a trial, and the DCM urged administrative sanctions as a second-best alternative. Baret said he had a team on the trail of

smuggling organizations. DATT said we must work with the Armed Forces to investigate these cases. Baret said getting evidence against Luna, for example, would be difficult. LEGATT suggested taping conversations and filming meetings.

18. (S) Baret said that was possible, but he was going to get rid of the people whose names he had received. He said Luna is a harder case, well connected. DATT encouraged him to work with the Secretary of the Armed Forces to make his anti-smuggling work effective. Baret said he was creating his own information network, and the Embassy was a great help to him. He said, "We're going to move on this." NAS Director reminded Baret of the seriousness of TIP decertification and said the USG would perceive no excuse for the DR because of its recent change of government. Baret asked for additional training from DHS, and the Attache promised continued support. The meeting ended with a friendly sidebar between Baret and the Ambassador.

UPDATE

19. (S) On November 5, NAS Director learned that Col. Luna and others named by the Ambassador had been dismissed the previous day. Later that morning, Armed Forces Secretary Sigfrido Pared Perez confirmed to NAS Director that Baret had visited him the previous day, and "they had worked together to solve some personnel problems." On November 8, daily Diario Libre reported that Immigration had fired 37 officials previously assigned to five airports and the ferry terminal.

COMMENT

110. (S) In matters relating to corruption, Embassy has high confidence in several ranking members of the current government. The jury is still out on Baret, but initial impressions are good. If his performance continues to match his words, action may finally be possible against the longstanding, Mafia-like smuggling networks whose nefarious dealings undermine Dominican border control and threaten U.S. homeland security.
HERTELL